

FAITHFUL AND PRACTICAL — HANDS-ON MINI-COURSE

NotebookLM

AI that only uses what you give it. Source-locked. Hallucination-resistant.

The Problem

The Risk With Standard AI for Bible Study

Why Standard AI Can Be Dangerous for Theology

What happens with ChatGPT on theology

- ✗ Draws from millions of sources — including heterodox ones
- ✗ Cannot guarantee it is using your tradition or your theology
- ✗ May produce confident interpretations that contradict your pastor's teaching
- ✗ Scripture quotes may be slightly wrong — AI paraphrases without flagging it

What NotebookLM does differently

- ✓ Only draws from documents you upload — nothing else
- ✓ Every answer is grounded in your pastor's actual words
- ✓ You can ask 'Where in the source does it say this?' — it cites its answer
- ✓ If it cannot find the answer in your source, it tells you

↑ *NotebookLM trades breadth for trustworthiness. For theological content, that is the right trade.*

The Concept

Source-Locked AI — The Mental Model

How NotebookLM Works — The Walled Garden

- ◆ You create a notebook and upload your own source documents
- ◆ NotebookLM reads and indexes your sources — nothing else enters its context
- ◆ When you ask a question, it answers only from what you uploaded
- ◆ It cites the specific source and location of every answer
- ◆ If the answer is not in your sources, it says so — it does not guess
- ◆ Think of it as a very thorough research assistant who has read everything you gave them and nothing else

Demo 1 of 2

Personal Bible Study — From One Uploaded Source

Demo 1 — Personal Study Guide from a Sermon Transcript

AFTER UPLOADING YOUR SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Using only the content I have uploaded:

1. Summarise the main theme of this sermon in 2-3 sentences
 2. Identify three things this passage reveals about who God is
 3. Give me two questions to sit with in personal reflection this week
 4. Suggest one practical response for this week based specifically on this passage
- Draw only from the uploaded content. Do not add anything from outside the source.

Watch for

The answers should be traceable back to specific moments in the sermon. If NotebookLM cites a page or timestamp, check it. That citation discipline is what makes it trustworthy.

Demo 2 of 2

Cell Group Preparation — From a Sermon to a Study Pack

Demo 2 — Cell Group Study Pack from a Sermon Transcript

AFTER UPLOADING YOUR SERMON TRANSCRIPT

Using only the content I have uploaded, produce a complete cell group study guide for a 60-minute session. Include:

1. A brief summary of the main theme (3-4 sentences)
2. Three key points – each in one sentence
3. Four discussion questions:
 - One opening question (no prior Bible knowledge needed)
 - Two questions exploring the content directly
 - One application question connecting to daily life
4. One practical challenge for the week
5. A short prayer focus based on themes in the content

Draw only from the uploaded content. Keep language warm and accessible.

Watch for

Check the opening question — can someone with no church background answer it? Check the three key points — are they what your pastor actually said, or are they a helpful addition NotebookLM supplied? That is the test.

The Audio Overview — Your Most Underused Feature

- ✦ After uploading your sources, click 'Audio Overview' — NotebookLM generates a 10-20 minute podcast-style conversation about your content
- ✦ Two AI voices discuss the key themes, insights, and questions from your uploaded material
- ✦ Send the link to cell leaders — they listen while commuting. Preparation done before they sit down
- ✦ Free plan: 3 Audio Overviews per day. Google AI Pro: higher limits. Generate it for every session.

The Most Common Mistake

X Uploading a poorly prepared transcript

NotebookLM's output quality is entirely dependent on your source quality. A messy transcript — with filler words, incomplete sentences, unclear structure — produces messy outputs. The most valuable preparation step is cleaning your transcript before uploading: remove filler words, break it into clear paragraphs, make sure speaker changes are clear. Twenty minutes of transcript cleaning produces far better outputs than any prompt adjustment.

✓ Fix: Clean your transcript first. NotebookLM cannot improve on the quality of what you give it.

What NotebookLM Cannot Do

- ⚠ NotebookLM cannot draw on information outside your uploaded sources — if you need broader research, use ChatGPT or Gemini
- ⚠ It cannot summarise content you have not uploaded — the notebook is limited to what you provide
- ⚠ Audio Overviews are limited to 3 per day on the free plan — plan your generation schedule
- ⚠ Your documents are uploaded to Google's servers — review Google's privacy policy before uploading sensitive pastoral material
- ⚠ NotebookLM does not check your theology — it reflects what is in your source, which could include errors in the original

Rule: NotebookLM is trustworthy within its sources. It cannot compensate for errors in the sources themselves.

Which NotebookLM Plan Do You Need?

Free

✓ Individual study, weekly sermon series prep, up to 3 Audio Overviews/day

100 notebooks, 50 sources per notebook, 50 chat queries/day.

✗ High-volume team use — limits will restrict production at scale

Google AI Pro (\$19.99/month, ~£16)

✓ Regular ministry production, more Audio Overviews, larger source libraries

NotebookLM Pro (5x limits) + Gemini 3.1 Pro + 2TB storage.

✗ Whole-church team deployment — use Workspace instead

Google Workspace Business Standard (~£11/user/month)

✓ Team-wide access to NotebookLM Plus across your church staff and leaders

NotebookLM Plus included in Business Standard and above.

✗ Individual users — AI Pro is better value for solo use

DO THIS NOW

Create a study guide from a sermon you already have

- 1 Go to notebooklm.google.com — sign in with your Google account
- 2 Click 'New notebook'. Give it a name: the current sermon series title
- 3 Click 'Add sources'. Upload one sermon transcript (PDF or text file)
- 4 Wait for processing — usually under 60 seconds
- 5 Paste Demo 2's prompt into the chat. Read the output. Check one answer against the transcript.

Do not upload anything important until you have tested with something low-stakes. Run the process once first.

What Good NotebookLM Output Looks Like

- ✓ Every key point traces back to something your pastor actually said in the source
- ✓ The opening discussion question can be answered by someone who has never read a Bible
- ✓ The practical challenge is specific — not 'pray more' but 'pray for one specific person this week'
- ✓ The Audio Overview captures the main themes — not just the structure
- ✓ Any claim you are uncertain about should be checkable against the original source — ask NotebookLM to cite it

NotebookLM is only as good as what you upload. Garbage in, garbage out — but excellent content in produces extraordinary output.

Also worth exploring:

- [Prompts 7 and 8 in the Student Prompt Library](#) are built for NotebookLM
- [Tutorial 04 \(Google Gemini\)](#) — Gemini and NotebookLM work well together for broader research